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March 2, 2015

Senator Bye, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee:

We are writing this letter to be submitted as Testimony on behalf of Danbury's children to ask you to restore funding for the following programs, which have been completely cut from the Governor's 2015-16 budget as indicated in H.B. No. 6824.

Community Plans for Early Education (known in Danbury as Danbury's Promise for Children Partnership) —\$20,000 in annual state funding has been leveraged to bring in **more than \$700,000** in private foundation funding to support home visitation programs for at-risk families, preschool teacher training, summer and after-school programming for at-risk children, outreach to families about the supports and services that are available to them, and the Directory of Services for Danbury's Families.

Parent Leadership Training Institute (PLTI) and People Empowering People (PEP)—\$60,000 in state funding has been supplemented by \$68,000 in local support. This year, PLTI and PEP have benefitted almost 200 participants (parents and children). In the past 5 years, PLTI and PEP have benefitted almost 700 individuals. Those participants have gone on to create a myriad of programs that enhance the quality of life for families in Danbury. Graduates of these programs serve in leadership roles on CityWide and school PTOs and School Governance Councils, in city government, and on state-wide boards, adding to the effectiveness and vitality of civic life in Danbury.

Help Me Grow—This state-wide program serves parents who have concerns about their child's development, connecting them with services and supports beginning at birth. The early detection of developmental delays in children saves thousands of dollars in special education and remedial education costs. Eliminating Help Me Grow will only cost local school districts and the state much more money as children who do not receive early intervention services enter school with delays and disabilities that could have been addressed before age 3. Cutting Help Me Grow is short-sighted public policy; it's an investment in children that we cannot afford to lose.

In addition to the above programs, which are completely eliminated in the Governor's budget, the following programs have been flat funded, or cut:

School Readiness and School Readiness Quality Enhancement Funds—Flat funding for School Readiness means preschool teachers cannot even get a cost of living raise. Quality Enhancement funds have been cut by 5%, which means fewer training opportunities for ALL of Danbury’s preschool teachers (not just School Readiness teachers), and thus a lower quality learning experience for Danbury preschoolers.

Cuts to Danbury Public School Funding for Before/After School and Summer Programs—These are just two areas in which the Danbury Public Schools are facing cuts:

- \$203,893 from the Extended School Hours part of the priority school grant, which provides time before and after school for tutoring and homework help, as well as childcare services that keep parents in the workforce. Before and after school programming helps children become proficient in the common core, includes anti-obesity programming, and prevents dangerous behaviors, while also providing educational training for parents.
- \$203,893 from Summer School funds for the most needy students, to prevent summer learning loss. These funds are vital, as Danbury has seen a stabilization or growth in scores, rather than a “summer slide,” as a result of these summer programs.

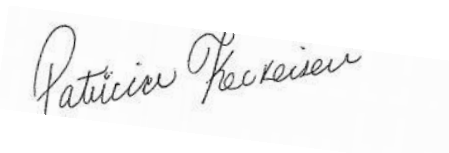
Many of these programs represent relatively small investments of state dollars, which are in many cases (such as the Community Plans, PLTI, and PEP) **matched by private foundation dollars and/or leveraged to bring in major grant funding**. In Danbury, the return on investment from these programs is at least \$9 for every \$1 invested by the state.

We urge you to restore funding for these programs so that Danbury’s children can have the support they need to succeed, beginning at birth.

Sincerely,



Juleen Flanigan
Co-chair



Patricia P. Keckeisen
Co-Chair



Caroline LaFleur
Coordinator